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ABSTRACT

An evaluation was made of New York City Schools' Gender Equity program, which was intended to improve attitudes in gender equity, self-esteem, decision-making skills, and cultural isolation among students of both sexes--especially those who were recent immigrants or limited English-speaking students--in grades 7-12. Approximately 620 students in 10 schools participated in the program during the spring of 1991. Activities that provided preparation for entry-level jobs were the vehicle for the strategies, cocurricular, and extracurricular activities of the program, including group guidance sessions, student and parent workshops, visit to job sites, visits to cultural sites, outside speakers, retreats, organized media events, job fairs, and the production of publications in which students had the opportunity to discuss gender equity. A pretest and posttest, provided in several languages, asked students whether each of 30 jobs are appropriate for either males, females, or both. Both males and females were significantly more likely to answer that persons of both sexes should hold the jobs on the posttest than on the pretest. Recommendations include the following: (1) increase parental involvement through workshops in which parents and students can discuss nontraditional career options; and (2) emphasize the importance of the school counselor to students' decisions to enroll in training programs. (CML)

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OREA Report

Vocational Education Act (V.E.A.): Gender Equity Support for Immigrant Students 1990-91

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Vocational Education Act (V.E.A.):
Gender Equity Support for
Immigrant Students
1990-91

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7/26/91

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vocational Education Act (V.E.A.) Gender Equity program is a federally funded program that was awarded to the Division of High Schools.

The aim of the Gender Equity program was to increase awareness of gender equity for both sexes, through activities that provided preparation for entry-level jobs. The program targeted students in grades seven through twelve, especially students who were recent immigrants and/or LAB/LAU eligible.

During the Spring 1991 semester, a total of ten schools and approximately 620 students participated in the Gender Equity program. A teacher along with a guidance counselor was responsible for coordinating strategies and co- and extra-curricular activities.

Evaluation findings indicate that although the treatment time was limited, a change was observed in the attitudes of students toward non-traditional careers. Based on survey results, students showed an increase in gender equity from pre- to posttest. The results indicate that activities that provide students with information about nontraditional career choices can influence students' attitudes about occupational choices and therefore develop more positive attitudes toward non-traditional careers.

The vast majority of teachers and guidance counselors expressed positive feelings about the program. A few, however indicated that the program was introduced late in the Spring term, and as a result exams and preparations for graduation conflicted with some of the planned activities.

Based on this evaluation, OREA offers the following recommendations:

- Increase parental involvement. This may be in the form of workshops in which parents and students can interact and discuss non-traditional options.
- Emphasize the importance of the role of the school counselor. Findings indicate their advice strongly influences students' decisions to enroll in training programs.
- Develop programs that address the specific needs of males and females. Results indicate that males and females seem to start with different attitudes about non-traditional careers. Thus programs should be developed to address these differences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared by the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment's High School Evaluation Unit (OREA/H.S.E.U.) of the New York City Board of Education, under the direction of Dr. Lori Mei. Mabel Payne, Evaluation Associate, served as project manager for the coordination and preparation of this evaluation. Special thanks to Basima Ahed for data collection and report writing, and to Jan Rosenblum for data analysis.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Stereotypic beliefs can influence young peoples' attitudes toward career choices, and as a result, youngsters often choose a career based on its perceived appropriateness to their gender. Occupational education programs at the high school level tend to reflect the same type of occupational sex stereotyping that exists in the world of work.

The Vocational Education Act (V.E.A.) Gender Equity program is a federally funded program that was awarded to the Division of High Schools to address this problem. The program was first implemented in the spring of 1991 to encourage the full participation of students who were recent immigrants in vocational training programs regardless of whether or not the programs were appropriate to their sex. The program also attempted to break down stereotypic attitudes of what students considered to be "men's work" and "women's work."

The aim of the Gender Equity program was to increase awareness of gender equity for both sexes, in programs which provide preparation for entry-level jobs. The program targeted students in grades seven through twelve, especially those students who were recent immigrants and/or LAB/LAU eligible*.

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*The Language Assessment Battery (LAB), is a norm-referenced test that measures the basic language skills of students whose native language is not English. LAU refers to a class action suit, "LAU v. Nichols" that was brought against the San Francisco school district, alleging that 1,800 Chinese students were being denied an equal education because of their limited English skills. In 1974, the Supreme Court decided that equal education was indeed

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

During the spring 1991 semester, a total of ten schools and approximately 620* students participated in the Gender Equity program. The number of students by school and borough appears in Table 1.

A V.E.A. per-session teacher designated by the principal of each of the participating high schools was responsible for identifying 35 to 100 students based on referrals by staff and student interest. The teacher along with a guidance counselor was also responsible for coordinating program initiatives and co- and extra-curricular activities.

A per-session teacher and guidance counselor were selected for coordinating strategies and co-and extra curricular activities. The selection criteria for teachers was: verifiable experience in planning and developing activities which impact positively on immigrant students, experience in coordinating in-school activities, experience in planning cultural events, experience in working with immigrant parents, and familiarity

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teachers, and curricula do not constitute equal education. As a result, Congress amended the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 to clarify the intent and design of programs for limited English speaking ability (LESA) students. The Act defined a bilingual education program as one that provides instruction both in English and the student's native language to allow the student to progress effectively through the educational system.

* The proposal originally estimated that 1,100 students at 11 high schools would participate in the program during the spring 1991 term.

Table 1

Participating Students by School and Borough
V.E.A. Gender Equity Program, 1990-91

Borough	School	Participating Students
Academic-Comprehensive High Schools		
Manhattan	Martin Luther King	65
Manhattan	Seward Park	66
Bronx	Walton	40
Bronx	Theodore Roosevelt	102
Brooklyn	Prospect Heights	95
Brooklyn	Eastern District	102
Brooklyn	Bushwick	36
Queens	Springfield Gardens	62
Vocational Technical High Schools		
Brooklyn	Automotive	37
Bronx	Alfred E. Smith	15
Total		620

- Overall, 620 students in 10 high schools participated in the program

with cultural and motivational factors which have an effect on career choice for students and parents in the school's immigrant population. The selection criteria for guidance counselors was: experience in working with the identified immigrant student group, familiarity with the cultural and motivational factors which affect decision-making in the immigrant student/parent group and knowledge of career guidance issues.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The stated objectives of the program were to achieve observable improvements in attitudes related to gender equity and self-esteem, decision-making skills, and feelings of cultural isolation. The specific objectives were as follows;

- Posttest results will demonstrate that participation of students in program activities will result in a positive change in students' attitudes regarding appropriate occupations for their gender and that male and female students will be better prepared to explore non-traditional careers.
- Through activities designed to sensitize students to gender issues, students' decision-making abilities and self-esteem will be improved, and their feelings of cultural isolation will be reduced.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the Gender Equity program was to achieve an observable difference in student attitudes related to gender equity. The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (OREA) administered a pre- and posttest survey* to participating

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*The survey that OREA distributed was adapted from "The Student Opinion Survey on Career Decisions," "Expanding Student Opportunities in Occupational Education: Methods to Reduce Sex-Role Stereotyping in Program Choice," a study conducted by the Institute for Occupational Education, Department of Education,

students as a way of determining whether the activities conducted with students and their parents were effective in promoting less stereotypic attitudes towards career and program choices. Surveys were made available to students in English, Haitian Creole, Spanish, and Chinese. The pretest was designed to elicit information on background characteristics, educational and career plans, and students' perceptions of occupational stereotyping. The posttest was identical to the pretest except that it omitted background questions.

Evaluators also collected qualitative data on program implementation from teachers/coordinators and guidance counselors. The information included types of activities provided to students, level of participation of students and parents, and coordinators' perceptions of program effectiveness.

SCOPE OF THE REPORT

This report is composed of four chapters. The introductory chapter includes a program overview and description of the evaluation procedures. Chapter II offers a description of the program and its implementation. Chapter III reports on outcomes, and evaluates the extent to which the program met its objectives, while Chapter IV offers evaluators' conclusions and recommendations based on program implementation and outcomes. A list of 30 occupations traditionally associated with either males, females, or both genders which was presented to students, appears in the Appendix.

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II. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The V.E.A. Gender Equity program was open to seventh through twelfth grade bilingual students who were LAB/LAU eligible. The majority of participants were in the ninth (31 percent), tenth (30 percent), or eleventh grade (25 percent). Ten percent were in the twelfth grade and four percent were in the eighth grade.

Students' native languages included: Spanish, 45 percent (N=281); Haitian Creole, 24 percent (N=146); Greek and Japanese 16 percent (N=102); and Chinese, 13 percent (N=82).

As shown in Table 2, over three-fourths of the participating students indicated that they intended to complete some type of post-secondary education, with nearly one-half of these students (46 percent) reporting that they were planning to complete a baccalaureate degree, and one-fifth (20 percent) reporting that they expected to attend graduate school.

Thirty percent (N=175) felt that they had made a fairly definite choice of a career while 33 percent (N=191) had only a general idea about an occupational choice, and the remainder, 37 percent (N=216) reported that they were undecided about a possible career.

Table 2

Highest Amount of Education Students Planned to Complete
V.E.A. Gender Equity Program, 1990-91

Education	N	%
Some high school	35	6
Graduate from high school	82	13
Trade school	14	2
Business school	18	3
Two-year college	58	9
Four-year college	284	46
Graduate school	122	20
Total	613[a]	99[b]

[a] Data were not available for 7 students.

[b] Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

- Over three-fourths of the students participating in the pretest intended to complete some type of post-secondary education with nearly one-half of these students reporting that they planned to complete a baccalaureate degree.

STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

OREA collected qualitative data from a total of 12 teachers and guidance counselors to assess the implementation of the program. All of the respondents, reported that they coordinated some type of activity. Seventy-five percent (N=9) reported coordinating group guidance sessions, 67 percent (N=8) coordinated club activities, 58 percent (N=7) offered student and parent workshops, another 58 percent (N=7) conducted visits to job sites, or to the theater (58 percent), one-half (50 percent) sent invitations to outside speakers, 33 percent (N=4) prepared publications, 25 percent (N=3) organized visits to related exhibits or displays, 17 percent (N=2) designed retreats, and eight percent (N=1) organized media events.

Specific activities in which students could participate included: visits to the National Conference of Christians and Jews, a Karate Club and Soccer Team Exhibition, a job fair in Brooklyn, West Point Academy, Port Authority and the Navy Homeport, The Parson School of Design, career sites at AT&T and IBM, Mystic Seaport and the New York Aquarium, the Staten Island Navy Base, and the Botanical Gardens. The students also published a class newspaper which gave them an opportunity to share ideas about gender equity.

Thirty-three percent of the respondents indicated that they had involved parents in "role model leadership activities" as presenters at workshops. At Seward Park High School for example, parents were invited to share information about their lives in

China and their present status in New York City. They discussed with students the differences between the two lifestyles, and their views about the changing role of women.

All the V.E.A. guidance counselors who responded to the questionnaire reported providing group guidance sessions to students and meeting with parents to discuss career issues. Topics discussed in the group guidance sessions with students included stereotyping, equality, non-traditional careers/decision making, networking for job interviews, roles of husband/wife in the American family, the role of males in parenting, and the role of women in the workplace. Topics discussed during the parent/student meetings included parents' feelings about women and men doing non-traditional jobs and how they dealt with cultural differences, and parents' attitudes toward their children going into non-traditional jobs.

Teachers and guidance counselors indicated that they had provided opportunities to students to discuss career decision-making issues and issues relating to the sex stereotyping of occupations. Some of the career decision-making issues that were discussed included: examining the role a spouse plays in the home when the other is out working, and the American outlook concerning careers and how it may differ from that of other countries. At one school, students were able to discuss banking and the opportunities that were available in this area with a banker from the community.

Issues relating to sex stereotyping of occupations included discussions of the ideal home situation for a working couple and an examination of the consequences of stereotyping.

Guidance counselors and teachers were asked whether or not they had observed a change in students' attitudes towards gender equity as a result of participating in program activities. Some teachers felt that it was too early to tell whether the program had affected real change in students' attitudes. The majority, however, felt that students had become more aware of issues relating to gender equity, had begun to think beyond traditional lines and to explore other options available to them. One guidance counselor felt that as a result of participating in this program, her students became, "a little more tolerant of views other than the ones they inherited from their own culture regarding gender roles in society." Another said: "Both boys and girls seemed to go away from stereotyping of occupations and have become more 'democratic' as to who can perform what job." Others felt that girls became 'more vocal' about performing jobs that boys could do. One teacher stated, "toward the end of this program, both boys and girls were concerned with responsibilities rather than who should perform the job."

III. OUTCOMES

FINDING OUT ABOUT CAREERS

Pre- and posttest data were collected from the 620 students who participated in the program (OREA was able to match 235 surveys for pre-post comparisons). Students gave their opinions about the availability of information about programs at schools.

In the pretest, only 13 percent of the females and 24 percent of male students felt they had sufficient information about career-related programs at their schools. That percentage increased in the posttest to 34 percent for females and 31 percent for males.

Students reported on methods for obtaining information that they thought would be most helpful to them, and those they had actually used. The majority (82 percent) selected "materials and information sent to students and their parents" as the preferred way to receive information and "classroom discussion" (76 percent) as their second preference. However, fewer students reported actually using these methods; only 52 percent reported actually receiving information in the mail and 57 percent reported actually having "class discussions."

Students were asked from whom they would seek advice to help them decide on a career. As shown in Table 3, on the pretest, male students were most likely to seek advice from a school counselor; their second and third choices were father and teacher, respectively. Females also ranked school counselor as their first choice, but teacher was their second choice, followed

Table 3

Persons from Whom Students Would Seek Advice to Help Them Decide on an Occupation
V.E.A. Gender Equity Program, 1990-91

	Males				Females			
	Pre		Post		Pre		Post	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No one	19	2	18	2	13	1	24	2
School counselor	167	18	128	17	224	20	165	17
Teacher	128	14	93	13	182	16	132	13
Male friends	74	8	64	9	63	6	60	6
Female friends	45	5	40	5	74	7	74	8
Mother	123	13	104	14	168	15	144	15
Father	132	14	103	14	122	11	106	11
Brother	62	7	49	7	71	6	67	7
Sister	50	5	46	6	70	6	78	8
Other relative	62	7	63	9	78	7	98	10
Other	50	5	33	4	47	4	30	3

- Males and females indicated that they would most likely seek advice from a school counselor on both the pretest and posttest.

by mother. On the posttest, male students were again most likely to seek advice from the school counselor followed by their mother or father. The attitudes of female students were similar. They reported that they would seek advice from a school counselor first, followed by their mother or their teacher. These findings suggest that the school counselor has a strong influence on students' career choices.

MAKING A CAREER CHOICE

OREA asked students to rank the factors that would be most important to them in choosing a career. As Table 4 shows, a majority of the students believed that a job should offer a good salary. On the pretest, both male and female students ranked "chance to get ahead" in second place and "chance to use (my) skills and abilities," in third place. On the posttest, they ranked "chance to use my skills and abilities" in second place and "chance to help others," in the third place. Interestingly, the percentage of female students showing preference for good salaries increased from pretest (72 percent) to posttest (76 percent) while the corresponding percentages decreased among males (pretest=77 percent, posttest=68 percent).

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND NON-TRADITIONAL CAREERS

Students ranked a list of factors that might be expected to influence their decision to enroll in a training program. As Table 5 indicates, male and female students agreed on the two most important factors that would influence their decision. The two most popular choices on both the pre and posttest were: "earn

Table 4

Reasons Given by Students for
Choosing a Future Career
V.E.A. Gender Equity Program, 1990-91

	Male		Female	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Good salary	77%	68%	72%	76%
Chance to work with people	34	36	39	34
Chance to get ahead	47	43	47	32
Many jobs available	32	36	25	22
out door work	26	14	9	15
Chance to work with hands	34	31	33	28
Others think job is important	39	31	23	25
Chance to use my skills and abilities	46	55	40	51
Chance to help others	36	45	35	50
Freedom from super-vision	33	34	29	32
Help to make the world a better place	44	44	38	32
Flexible hours	23	27	26	21

- The majority of male and female students rated "good salary" highest on both the pretest and the posttest.
- On the pretest, both females and males ranked "chance to get ahead" in second place, and "chance to use my skills and abilities" in third place. On the posttest, both ranked "chance to use my skills and abilities" in second place, and "chance to help others" in third place.
- The percentage of female students showing a preference for good salaries increased from the pretest to the posttest while the corresponding percentage decreased for males.

Table 5

Factors Influencing Students' Decision to Enroll
in a Vocational Career Program
V.E.A. Gender Equity Program, 1990-91

Factors	Male		Female	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Trying out the course for 6 weeks before signing up for it	35%	36%	34%	30%
A 1-year rather than a 2-year or longer program in the field	21	28	21	23
The course offered at the school you now attend, rather than at a vocational technical high school	28	28	27	30
At least one other student of your sex in the course	13	18	16	17
At least 20% of the students in the course are members of your sex (that would be 6 out of 30 students, for example)	11	16	8	18
Female friends in the course	29	31	18	17
Male friends in the course	17	16	19	19
More job opportunities	64	62	65	69
Earn good money	70	71	73	70
Parents thought it was a good course for you	47	41	51	46
Female friends thought it was a good course for you	19	22	15	20
Male friends thought it was a good course for you	21	21	11	21
Guidance counselor thought it was a good course for you	28	27	31	36
Students in the course would be friendly	32	37	34	34
The teacher would be fair	41	49	56	51

- Male and female students agreed on the two most important factors that would influence them to enroll in a training program from pretest to posttest. The two most popular choices were "earn good money" and "more job opportunities," selected by nearly three-quarters of male and female students.

good money" and "more job opportunities." These choices were selected by nearly three-quarters of male and female students.

ATTITUDES TOWARD NON-TRADITIONAL CAREERS

An important part of the program was the opportunity for students to participate in discussions about non-traditional occupations. There was a dramatic difference between males and females in their responses to the question of whether they would choose an occupation that is usually associated with men only or women only. On the pretest, over one-third (37 percent) of males and 60 percent of females said they had seriously considered a non-traditional career choice. Male students showed an increase from pretest to posttest in their consideration of a non-traditional occupation; 47 percent said they had considered a non-traditional career. No change was found in the female students' attitudes from pretest to posttest. One explanation for this may be that females were more informed about possible non-traditional careers than males prior to participating in the program. Data do indicate that on the pretest, females were almost two times more likely to have contemplated a non-traditional career than were males.

To determine whether there was increased gender equity, students participating in the program were asked their opinions about the appropriateness of various occupations for males and females. A list of 30 occupations was presented, including occupations traditionally associated with males, females, or both genders. The students were provided with three options: that the job should be held by males only, by females only, or by both

sexes (see Appendix). Because the only non-sexist response was "Both," the number of times students chose "Both" was summed for all of the occupations.

On the pretest, the mean number of times students chose "Both" for the 30 occupations was 18.2 (S.D.=7.8). That increased significantly on the posttest to 21.3 (S.D.=8.2) (t=5.8, df=235, $p< .0009$).

Further examination of the data revealed that there were positive mean gains from pre- to posttest that were statistically significant for males and females. For males who chose "Both," the mean score was 18.0 (S.D.= 7.8) and increased significantly (t=2.9, df=223 $p<.004$) to 20.3 (S.D.=8.6). For females the mean score was 18.4 (S.D.=7.8) and increased significantly on the posttest (t=5.2, df=275) to 22.1 (S.D.=7.8) indicating that both males and females were more likely to give non-sexist responses after participating in the program.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluation findings indicate that although the Gender Equity program operated for a limited time, a change was observed in the attitudes of students toward non-traditional careers. Based on survey results, students showed an increase in positive attitudes toward gender equity from pre- to posttest. The results indicate that activities that provide students with information about non-traditional career choices can influence students' attitudes about occupational choices and therefore develop more positive attitudes toward non-traditional careers.

The vast majority of teachers and guidance counselors expressed positive feelings about the program. A few, however, indicated that the program was introduced late in the Spring term, and as a result exams and preparations for graduation conflicted with some of the planned activities.

Based on this evaluation, OREA offers the following recommendations:

- Increase parental involvement: This may be in the form of workshops in which parents and students can interact and discuss non-traditional options.
- Emphasize the importance of the role of the school counselor. Findings indicate their advice strongly influences students' decisions to enroll in training programs.
- Develop programs that address the specific needs of males and females. Results indicate that males and females seem to start with different attitudes about non-traditional careers. Thus programs should be developed to address these differences.

APPENDIX

Of each of the following occupations please check who you think should hold these jobs?

	Occupation	Only males	Only Females	Both
A.	Plumber			
B.	Police officer			
C.	Store salesclerk			
D.	Truck driver			
E.	Flight attendant			
F.	Nurse			
G.	Farmer			
H.	Guidance counselor			
I.	Secretary			
J.	School principal			
K.	Real estate agent			
L.	Restaurant manage			
M.	Veterinarian			
N.	Automobile mechanic			
O.	Cosmetologist			
P.	Construction worker			
Q.	Data processor			
R.	Electrician			
S.	Machine and metal worker			
T.	Drafter/ draftsperson			
U.	Child care aide			
V.	Welder			
W.	Elementary school teacher			
X.	Air conditioning mechanic			
Y.	Dental assistant			
Z.	Computer programmer			
AA.	Librarian			
BB.	Florist			
CC.	Licensed practical nurse			
DD.	Food service worker			